



Paul Michael Lutzeler

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"The US-EU Divide: Problems and Prospects"

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3:30 p.m.

Mershon Center

Room 120



According to Paul Lutzeler, the US-EU divide can be analyzed most effectively by looking at cultural, political and economic differences. In his talk at the Mershon Center, Lutzeler examined whether, despite these differences, there exists an Atlantic bridge that can still be rebuilt. While many have pointed to differences in American and European goals and dreams, he thought a Trans-Atlantic Community may still be possible if founded on a set of common values such as human rights and democracy.

Europe and America have some differences in their world-views and approaches to issues and challenges. Europe tends to keep the future of the globe in mind in its undertakings. Protection of the environment is an important priority in Europe, and so is ensuring that the poor and elderly sections of society do not fall through the security net.

This social component is largely lacking in the American conception, said Lutzeler. Particularly with the decline and crisis of the American dream--the belief that the far-sighted, concrete utopia of economic advancement could be realized by any American--the American conception has become more egocentric and materialistic. The quest to become a millionaire in the shortest amount of time has brought with it a mentality of economic ruthlessness free of social concern, argued Lutzeler. Large sections of the middle class have drifted downwards towards the ranks of the poor. Environmental concerns have been largely ignored, as big business always tends to get its way. A context in which the wealthy gets wealthier and poor only poorer, cannot serve as a model for others, he said. Coupled with a disregard of international law and institutions, the American model cannot be sustained and is in decline. In the eyes of the many, it will be eclipsed by the European dream in the 21st century, which stands for higher principles and tends to be inspiring for more people, argued Lutzeler.

In sum, the defense of human rights, freedom for others, environmental awareness, and concern for global peace increasingly separates the two entities. The two powers also differ in terms of religiosity. While there is a continued trend of secularization in Europe, America has seen the growth of Evangelical Christianity and has become more religious. As a result, one may see the divide as a faith-reason clash as well.

In a certain sense, the European dream looks like the old American dream of defending human rights and democracy. Although he admitted these two characterizations are largely simplifications, one can still discern a cultural shift in America. This is partly due to the materialism of the 1980s and 90s, and partly because of the events of 9/11 and the ensuing war on terror, both of which transformed the American picture.

However, some qualifications are in order. Lutzeler argued that on the one hand, the US itself is divided on many issues. As much as there is a religious revival and reduction of civil liberties, one notes that there also exists considerable social reaction to such developments. On the other hand, Europe is not a utopia either. In fact, one sees that cosmopolitan multiculturalism in Europe tends to stop when people feel threatened; either by unemployment or cultural differences and there exists considerable xenophobia and discrimination directed at minority

groups.

On the political side, the fall of the Warsaw Pact and collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 has meant different things for the US and EU. The division of Europe in two separate spheres ended in 1990. This amounted to a geopolitical revolution for the continent as Western and Eastern Europe worked their way to unification. In a way, Europe finally broke free of the dormant status with limited maneuverability it found itself in the aftermath of WWII. This revolution allowed Europe to regain an independent and active subject status.

The most prominent manifestation of this is clear in the expansion of the EU towards the East, which ostensibly benefits the US as well. Eastern Europeans have become equal members of the club and returned to the European family, but this also meant the reduction of American influence and decline of the appeal of American commodities in this area. Even though the EU expansion was accompanied by the expansion of NATO, Europe has begun to develop its own military wing. EU is no longer willing to be the military pygmy as it was in the Cold War period, said Lutzeler, allowing the US colossus playing the role of sheriff in the region. In the absence of a common enemy and no longer bound by the US, the EU has begun to play a noticeably more independent role in international affairs. As a result, the old Atlantic alliance is drifting apart and there are increasing calls on the part of Europeans to redefine the mission and functions of NATO.

Democratization is a common political goal pursued by the US and EU. However, the means of achieving this goal differ substantially among the two. Europeans prefer patient negotiations and diplomacy, as opposed to the American way of exporting democracy in a militaristic manner. The goal of EU membership works as a powerful incentive for candidate countries to become fully democratic. The latter may be inherently limited to the continent, but it is seen as more effective.

The differing views towards the military and wars in general springs arguably from the different experiences of 20th century of the two entities. The US played an important role and emerged from both World Wars as a winner, said Lutzeler, while Europe emerged as the loser. The destruction and impoverishment these wars brought to the European continent, in sharp contrast to the gains of the US, has resulted in the perception of war as costly and ruinous among Europeans. As a result, diplomacy and working together is much more attractive to Europeans.

In the economic realm, the divide between the US and EU lies in the conception of a single market. EU is already world's largest market. But for the Europeans, the creation of a single market is not the end goal, but a pragmatic means to achieve a more encompassing political union. The intention of the EU is not purely economic, but clearly political: an ever closer union that surpasses individual member states. The US, on the other hand, has only sought economic treaties such as NAFTA. It has no intention of political or even monetary union with another country.

In the international realm, Europe is in favor of international cooperation and strengthening of multilateral institutions as a peaceful deterrence to conflict and peaceful resolution of issues. The US, however, routinely ignores international law and institutions, and does not support international accords such as the International Criminal Court and Kyoto Treaty. Hence, this may be seen as the unilateralism-multilateralism clash in the international arena, since the US prefers to act unilaterally in resolving conflicts if necessary.

Demographically, the US and EU also display different patterns. The European population continues to get older and is projected to actually decline in the next two decades. The US population, on the other hand, continues to rise. One common pattern is discernible, however: the decline of Europeans or European-Americans and the increase of minority populations in both: Muslims in Europe and Hispanics in America. Because of a strong influx of working-age people, the US population is avoiding some of the pension problems confronted by European states. Further, Europe is an emigrant continent while America is an immigration country, which also helps explain the differing reactions to multiculturalism.

Given these quite wide-ranging differences and differing trends in various realms, what may the Trans-Atlantic Community be said to stand for? In the face of this growing US-EU divide, Lutzeler argued that the two entities may not seem so close at the present juncture, but there is still a common heritage of values the two sides may discover in the future, particularly during times of crisis. When Western values are threatened, people tend to become more aware of their common values. According to Lutzeler, what ultimately stands at the center of the common ground that exists between America and Europe is respect and protection of democracy and human rights. Europeans may differ amongst themselves as to what the ends of EU should be. Some such as the French desire the EU to be a strong and united rival to the US, but those who stress the common values the two shares wish the EU to be a strategic partner of the US, in advancing democracy and freedom around the globe.

Paul Michael Lützel is the Rosa May Distinguished University Professor in the Humanities at Washington University in St. Louis. He studied German and English Literature in Berlin, Edinburgh , Vienna , Munich and Indiana University where he received his Ph.D. in 1972.

Dr. Lützel is the author of *Hermann Broch. A Biography*, a book that appeared in German, English, Spanish, and Japanese, and received the DAAD Prize of the German Studies Association. He wrote two books on the idea of Europe in German and European literature, as well as six other books on topics of 19th and 20th century German literature and edited many volumes in his areas of research. Momentarily he is working on a project concerning the topic of the "third world" in contemporary German literature. He is the director of the Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature at Washington University 's German Department. His most recent publication is *Postmoderne und postkoloniale deutschsprachige Gegenwartsliteratur*.

Dr. Lützel teaches both in the German Department as well as in the Comparative Literature Program. His research and teaching interests include German and European Romanticism, German exile literature, contemporary scholarly discourses (postmodernism, postcolonialism, globalization), and cultural studies in general. He received many fellowships and awards both for his research and his teaching: he is an honorary member of the AATG; he received the German Cross of Merit 1st class and the Austrian Cross of Honor in Arts and Sciences 1st class; he is a member of two German academies.

A first version of Dr. Lützel's talk was recently presented in Washington at the Metropolitan Club.